



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6

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DALLAS TEXAS 75202-2733

June 23, 1998

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

This Statement of Findings concludes U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review of the proposed award of Border Environmental Infrastructure Fund grant funds to the city of Donna in Hidalgo County, Texas, under the National Environmental Policy Act and implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 6 and 1500. The city of Donna proposes to build a 4.5 million gallon per day (MGD) replacement for the existing water treatment plant (WTP) on an 18-acre site, and build an inter-connect with the North Alamo Water Supply Corporation (NAWS) using funds partly provided through the North American Development Bank. The "colonias" in the city's periphery are partially served by NAWS and the Colonia Nueva Water Distribution System, Inc. However, only nine of the 20 "colonias" have water service. The inter-connect will provide an additional 1.5 MGD capacity which will allow service to the "colonias."

The city of Donna also proposes to expand the wastewater collection system to eliminate the densely-packed septic systems in the "colonias," and rehabilitate and expand its existing 3.0 MGD activated sludge wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Donna and the "colonias" do not have a sewage collection system. Area residents rely on substandard privies or septic systems, which present a clear threat to public health and safety that includes contamination of both surface and ground water sources. The WWTP is under enforcement action due to multiple effluent discharge violations. In addition, most sewage lift stations within the city of Donna experience overflows because pumping capacity is not adequate.

The EPA has concluded that the proposed actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary. After preparation and consideration of an environmental assessment (EA), EPA issued a preliminary finding of no significant impact (FNSI) for public comment on May 9, 1998. The 30-day public comment period expired on June 8, 1998. EPA received comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reaffirming its recommendations given in consultation #2-11-95-I-296, that disturbances of vegetation associated with these activities be scheduled to avoid the nesting period of March through August, be limited to clearing of one side of ditches, and to grade and revegetate with native species, where appropriate. The FWS concluded that the habitat contained in some of the non-concrete lined ditches appeared to have a low potential for the presence of Federally-listed species and not likely to be adversely affected by the proposed activities. The FWS requested notification in the event the project plans changed from the plans addressed in the consultation.

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Gregg A. Cooke

Regional Administrator